



FACT SHEET

U.S. Air Force Fact Sheet

3RD SPECIAL OPERATIONS SQUADRON

The 3rd Special Operations Squadron accomplishes global special operations tasking as a member of the Air Force component of United States Special Operations Command. It directly supports theater commanders by providing precision weapons employment and persistent intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance. It also plans, prepares, and executes MQ-1B Predator missions supporting special operations forces.

The 3rd SOS is located at Cannon Air Force Base, N.M. The squadron is the first Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA) squadron within AFSOC.

The MQ-1B Predator provides actionable intelligence support to conventional and special operations forces engaged in the Global War on Terror. The platform's unique capability provides SOF with an unblinking eye over the battlefield.



3rd Special Operations Squadron

Outfitted with television and infrared cameras for full motion video support and the deadly Hellfire missile, the Predator is used to track both stationary and mobile targets and, when necessary, to eliminate those targets.

Background

The 3rd SOS traces its heritage back to the World War I when it was activated as Photographic Section I on April 4, 1918. As part of I Corps Observation Group, the unit processed aerial photographs taken for intelligence use. After moving back to the United States in June of 1919, the unit was demobilized in July. In September 1919 the unit was organized as the 1st Photographic Section, assigned to the 1st Wing and then the 1st Surveillance Group, where they processed aerial photography for associated observation squadrons in Texas until becoming the 3rd Observation Squadron on June 1, 1937.

In 1937, the unit moved to Langley Field, Va., where it was attached to the Coast Artillery School using P-39 aircraft until 1942 and was subsequently disbanded in July of 1944. The unit was reconstituted on May 28, 1952 and renamed the 3rd Strategic Reconnaissance Squadron, operating the RB-47E aircraft. The squadron 3rd numerous Air Force bases and American cities and was a regular participant in SAC exercises until inactivation in July of 1958.

Ten years later, on May 1, 1968, the unit was organized as the 3rd Air Commando Squadron at Nha Trang Airport, South Vietnam. Absorbing the resources of the 14th Air Commando Squadron, the unit flew the AC-47 gunship in close air support of ground forces under night attack until August 1969.

On May 15, 1976, the 3rd was reactivated and renamed the 3rd Tactical Electronic Warfare Training Squadron. Operating out of Camp O'Donnell, Philippines, the PACAF Electronic Warfare Range, and the Crowe Valley Gunnery Range, the 3rd was responsible for realistic conventional, tactical, and electronic warfare training in a simulated combat environment for U.S. Marine, U.S. Navy, and allied fighter crews. This unit was inactivated Sept. 30, 1991.

On Oct. 28, 2005, the 3rd Special Operations Squadron was reactivated. The initial cadre of squadron members attended training in the spring and summer of 2005. Despite the lack of personnel the 3rd SOS flew 23 percent of the total Combined Force Air Component Command Predator hours for the last two months of 2005.

In 2005, the Dragons of the 3rd SOS supported the combatant commanders as the most requested asset in both the Afghan and Iraqi theatres. They logged 650 combat sorties in Afghanistan and 4,243 sorties in Iraq. The hours totaled over 14,000 for the combined theaters.

During 2007, the 3rd SOS doubled in size and tripled its combat capabilities. The squadron became the largest MQ-1B squadron in the Air Force within 20 months of its inception.

Currently, the squadron operates five MQ-1B combat lines engaged in OPERATION IRAQI and ENDURING FREEDOM. Additionally, the squadron has become the go-to RPA unit for all SOF operations and is the "model RPA" squadron for the entire DoD.